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INFO	LOG-00	AMAD-00	CA-00	INL-00	DOE-00	PDI-00	EB-00
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UNCLAS VIENNA 003813

DEPT FOR EUR/AGS, INR/EU, AND EUR/PPD FOR LISBETH KEEFE

OSD FOR COMMANDER CHAFFEE

WHITEHOUSE FOR NSC/WEUROPE

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: KPAO, AU, OPRC

SUBJECT: AUSTRIAN MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS: DECEMBER 05, 2005

Fewer Unemployed in EU, More in Austria

1. According to a report in Sunday's issue of centrist daily "Die Presse," unemployment in the European Union is declining. The EU unemployment rate in October 2005 was only 8.5 percent. In the Euro zone, unemployment is also down to 8.3 percent. The bad news, however, is that in Austria the trend is going the other way. Here, the unemployment rate of 5.3 percent, although below the EU average, is still 0.3 percent over last year's figures. Experts have been observing this trend for months and attribute it to Austria's growing workforce.

Wooing the Middle Class

2. Speaking on ORF TV's Sunday morning program "Meet the Press," SPOe leader Alfred Gusenbauer presented his plans for tax cuts and other measures that would primarily benefit medium-income groups, should he become Austrian chancellor.

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Centrist daily "Die Presse" lists the SPOe's five key proposals in this area: Tax cuts for gross incomes of up to 3,700 Euros per month; abolishing university tuition fees; the creation of an additional 100,000 childcare places as well as 100,000 day-school places; and raising the commuter and kilometer allowances by 15 percent.

----- Poland's President Admits Possible "Landings" of CIA Planes -----

3. In an interview with liberal daily "Der Standard," Poland's outgoing President Aleksander Kwasniewski said he considers it "conceivable that for technical or other reasons such landings (i.e. of CIA operated airplanes in Poland) took place, but that's something we'll have to look into. For technical reasons in particular it could have been possible." The outgoing President also stressed the "comprehensive cooperation" between the US and Poland on security issues. However, he underscored he finds it highly unlikely the "Polish intelligence services could be involved in something that entailed the violation of human rights." Meanwhile, like all Austrian media, independent provincial daily "Salzburger Nachrichten" says reports on alleged covert CIA prisoner transports could put a strain on the visit of US Secretary Condoleezza Rice in Berlin. The German government has confirmed the existence of a list with over 400 flights, which according to media reports are believed to have transported terrorist suspects. ORF radio suggests Rice will go on the offensive over EU concerns that the US is operating secret CIA prisons in Eastern Europe.

----- Vienna Inquiry in 2003 -----

4. says centrist daily "Die Presse" in its report on the alleged CIA activities in Europe, referring to the controversial US overflight over Austria in January 2003. Sourcing independent political weekly "profil," the "Presse" writes that the Austrian government had launched an unofficial protest with the US Embassy in Vienna following the overflight. The government had demanded information on whether the plane operated by Tepper Aviation was actually a US government plane. The Americans confirmed this, expressing their regret at having violated Austrian airspace, the "Presse" quotes from the "profil" report. The US Embassy in Vienna has meanwhile told the "Presse" that the US government never denied the flight took place. In

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response to inquiries in 2003 from the Austrian government, the Embassy had investigated and determined a C-130 aircraft had in fact entered Austrian airspace and the US should have requested diplomatic clearance from the Austrian government.

----- Visa Affair: Pressure on Plassnik Increasing -----

5. A front-page report in mass-circulation daily "Kurier" says that despite Austria's intervention in Belgrade, Serbian newspapers continue to carry ads advertising the (illegal) sale of visas for Austria, and other Schengen

countries. Pressure on the Austrian Foreign Ministry over the affair is growing, with the Greens and the SPÖ having demanded on Wednesday a detailed report on the issue in Parliament. Both opposition parties call for a parliamentary investigative committee to shed light in the issue, the daily says.

----- Interrogation of Syrian Suspects in Vienna Today -----

6. All major Austrian media report that UN investigators are due to question five Syrian officials today as part of their inquiry into the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. The officials will be interrogated at UN offices in Vienna. An interim UN report has already implicated Syrian officials in the murder. According to centrist daily "Die Presse," the names of four of the five Syrians have been leaked to the press: Sourcing news agency Reuters, the daily says they are former head of the Syrian intelligence services in Lebanon Rustom Ghazali and his aide Jamea Jamea, as well as the two Generals Thafer Youssef and Abdul-Karim Abbas.

----- WTO Progress America's Hottest Topic during Austrian EU Presidency -----

7. In a PAS-organized exclusive telephone interview with Austrian Press Agency APA, Assistant US Trade Representative for Europe and the Mediterranean Shaun Donnelly stressed that progress in WTO negotiations regarding a further liberalization of the global economy will be the US' key concern during Austria's EU Presidency in 2006. The Doha development round is the most burning economic issue, he

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emphasized. Thus, the EU and the US, the world's dominant markets, would have to push the WTO talks in order to achieve success. Doha is not only aimed at helping the developing countries, it is also important for the EU and the US, he underscored. Despite extensive US-EU agreement in most areas, there remain as "unresolved issues" the differences in the agrarian sector, the dispute over subsidies for aircraft manufacturers Boeing and Airbus, as well as the EU's import ban on hormone-treated beef from the US, Donnelly said. He stressed, however, the significance of cooperation.

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